

with the Corps of Engineers and the Federal Government, to provide cost-effective solutions and to be able to refine and fine-tune those plans without having to go back through the reauthorization process.

We talk a lot on the floor of this House about reducing Federal redtape. This is a simple item that we, by legislation, can permit our communities to avoid the costs and consequences of trying to crawl back through the legislative process or, worse, build simply a project that we know will fail.

As we watch the flooding that is about to occur this spring across the country, I hope that we will think about how the Federal Government needs to be a more constructive partner for livable communities. I strongly urge my colleagues to join the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) and me in the sponsorship of H.R. 1186.

VACATION OF SPECIAL ORDER AND GRANTING OF SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to bring to the attention of the American people what I think is a great injustice that is occurring in our country. It is injustice that seeks to pit community against community, color against color and the American people against one another. It is an injustice that we are witnessing in my district in Staten Island, but it is injustice that I have little doubt we will be battling throughout the Nation before long.

The controversy centers around the seemingly innocuous-sounding policy advanced by the Environmental Protection Agency known as "environmental justice". In theory, this legal doctrine is supposed to reflect the notion that all communities, regardless of race or ethnicity, should share equally in the burdens and risks of environmental protection policies. It sounds reasonable, except, of course, until the theory is applied.

Over the years, the policy has been twisted like a pretzel, so that today, lawyers and activists now believe that different people deserve different treatment or, more precisely, that some people are more equal than others.

Earlier this month, for example, top Federal officials from the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Transportation, Housing and

Urban Development, and even the White House Council on Environmental Quality came to New York for a day-long tour of waste transfer stations in the South Bronx. They came to see for themselves and to hear the residents who claim that these facilities pose an environmental injustice on their community.

Let me add that I have no problem with them going to the South Bronx.

The morning after the tour, the EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality organized an unprecedented 8-hour public hearing in which residents had the opportunity to voice their outrage over the existence of the transfer stations. At the conclusion of the event, and at a speed in which I have never seen the Federal Government act, the White House Council on Environmental Quality announced that it would undertake an environmental justice investigation in the South Bronx.

This is, quite possibly, the most clear-cut hypocrisy on the part of the EPA that I have ever witnessed. At its core, the doctrine of environmental justice defies the most fundamental American principles of equality and justice. Why? Because while the White House Council on Environmental Quality mobilized its top officials for a tour of the South Bronx, granted a predominantly minority community, it never considered traveling just a few miles to Staten Island, which just happens to be a predominantly white community, to see one of the most horrific examples and nightmares of the 20th century known as the Fresh Kills Landfill.

To me, Mr. Speaker, it was an insult to every resident of Staten Island and a slap in the face to the hard working people of my district, who have been burdened for 50 years by this 3,000 acre, 150-foot-high illegal garbage dump, the largest in the country. This facility is not only the largest in our country, but one of, so legend has, one of only two man-made structures visible from outer space.

Recognizing the absurdity of any investigation on waste disposal in New York without a full and comprehensive discussion of Fresh Kills, I filed my own complaint with the EPA for an environmental justice review on Staten Island. In the days since, the silence from the EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality has been deafening.

It should also not be forgotten that for the South Bronx and every other borough in New York City, waste would be continually moving through transfer stations en route to a destination out of state, whereas at the Fresh Kills Landfill the trash literally sits and rots in our community forever.

The EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality failed to see the hypocrisy of fighting tooth and nail against a waste transfer station or transfer stations in the South Bronx because it would be located in a minority community but, at the same time,

requiring a community like Staten Island to accept nearly 10 billion pounds of garbage every year.

Let there be no mistake. If the EPA or a State or local agency finds a particular facility poses a health risk to a community, the agency should mitigate or eliminate that risk, regardless, regardless, of the race or ethnicity of the residents of the neighborhood. But a governmental policy that takes skin color into account does not do justice, environmental or otherwise, to Americans, nor should it be funded with our tax dollars.

The fact is that 234 billion, I say billion, pounds of raw garbage is no less offensive because it sits rotting in a community that is predominantly white. I believe this country stands for equality for all. If something adversely affects someone, it does not matter if they are black, Hispanic or white. If it is bad for one, it is bad for all.

It may come as a surprise to advocates of environmental justice, but thousands of Staten Islanders of all races and ethnicities live within one mile of the Fresh Kills Landfill. Much like me, they do not see color when looking at garbage, they just see trash, and they know hypocrisy when they smell it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

MY COMMITMENT TO CROP INSURANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, low commodity prices, disease and weather-related problems, coupled with declining export opportunities and weak demand, have taken a devastating toll on Colorado's agriculture industry. Farm income has fallen dramatically over the past 2 years, and it is difficult to predict how soon it might rebound. While Congress recently helped stave off disaster in rural America, with an emergency assistance package, it is evident gaping holes exist in federal crop insurance as a viable safety net.

In 1996, Congress passed the Freedom to Farm Act, allowing producers the

flexibility to adjust crop acreage in response to both economic and agronomic factors, while providing farms a safety net through market transition payments, loan rates, and crop insurance.

Recently, some have suggested Congress return to the old system of deficiency payments and production quotas, and take action to increase loan rates and extended loan maturities in order to improve low commodity prices.

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But because the international marketplace has grown so rapidly and because American exports of any particular commodity represent such a small percentage of world production, reducing acreage in the United States no longer has much effect on world market prices.

U.S. wheat exports, for example, only account for approximately 5 percent of global production. The future of Colorado's farm profits does lie outside U.S. borders. I will continue my work in Congress to guarantee fair and abundant trading opportunities overseas for our producers and their commodities.

As this progresses, however, we must also ensure a viable safety net exists for farmers and ranchers in countering the effects of unexpected market disruptions and natural disasters. I am working alongside the chairman and other Members of the House Committee on Agriculture to develop a better, more comprehensive risk management program which will provide incentives for farmers to participate while protecting against losses and low market prices.

This plan will allow the market to work without artificially raising consumer prices, without pricing us out of the export market, without acreage or production controls, and while adhering to Federal budget constraints. Furthermore, this crop insurance program must allow producers to recover their cost production in the case of natural disasters but also encourage and reward the production of the harvesting of crops.

Reforming the current risk management system will take a lot of hard work and the interaction between Colorado producers, the Congress, and the President. But in order for farmers and ranchers to survive and thrive in market-driven systems, an adequate safety net must exist to account for unforeseen and uncontrollable losses. I will continue my work in Congress to ensure Colorado farmers and ranchers have this necessary option.

GIVE AMERICAN SAMOA ITS COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today and I will continue to do so

in the coming weeks to express my utter dismay and disappointment with the United States Postal Service.

On April 17, 1900, the traditional chiefs of the South Pacific Islands of Tutuila and Aunu'u agreed to become a part of the United States and the United States flag was raised on what is now known as the U.S. Territory of American Samoa. Since that time, the residents of American Samoa have been proud of their affiliation with this great Nation and have demonstrated their loyalty and patriotism in countless ways.

Mr. Speaker, April 17 is known as Flag Day in American Samoa and it is the biggest holiday in the territory. Flag Day celebrations are not limited to American Samoa. Flag Day is celebrated throughout the United States wherever there is a sizeable Samoan community. American Samoans in Hawaii, California, Nevada, Utah, Alaska, Washington, and other parts of the United States pause each year on this important date to celebrate this monumental occasion in its history.

Unbeknownst to many Americans, Mr. Speaker, April 17 of next year will mark the 100th year in which this South Pacific territory, U.S. territory, has had a political relationship with the United States. And the local government leaders have been preparing for this centennial celebration for the last 3 years.

Three years ago, American Samoa's governor and myself began the process of requesting that a U.S. postage stamp be issued to commemorate the centennial of American Samoa joining the part of the American political family. The Postal Service responded to our 1996 request for a stamp by saying we were too early to apply for consideration. We again asked last year, and we were told we applied too late. We have also been told that the Postal Service just does not recognize territorial events.

Having researched the issue, which expected America Samoa to be treated like any other American jurisdiction in this regard. States which have had centennials of their statehood commemorated recently on postage stamps include the States of Wisconsin, Tennessee, Iowa, Utah, Florida, and Texas.

The Postal Service also issues stamps to commemorate such territorial acquisitions as the Louisiana Purchase, and the acquisitions of the territories of Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

American Samoa, Mr. Speaker, is the only U.S. territory left which voluntarily joined the United States. We have waited 100 years for a commemorative stamp, and the Postal Service is still making excuses. Mr. Speaker, how much longer do we have to wait?

Mr. Speaker, this is absurd. I ask my fellow Americans to write and to e-mail the U.S. Postal Service to give American Samoa its centennial postage stamp.

Mr. Speaker, the Postal Service's conduct in handling this matter is

clearly inconsistent with past Postal Service practices. The Postal Service has issued commemorative stamps for flowers like roses, comic strips, horses, and even a foreign country like Australia. Yet here, when the request is one for recognition of a celebration of a political union with the United States territory, the first of such stamp for an American territory, the Postal Service saw fit to reject the request on grounds that it would not add to its so-called balanced stamp program.

Many Americans do not realize this, Mr. Speaker, but American Samoa was a major staging area for some 40,000 soldiers and Marines in World War II. Thousands of Samoa's sons and daughters served proudly in the military service.

Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely ridiculous, and I appeal to my fellow Americans to write to the Postal Service, tell them why we should have a postage stamp. We need a postage stamp, and I think we could ask for no less.

The per capita rate of enlistment in the U.S. military services is as high as any state or territory; for decades American Samoa served as a Naval coaling station for our ships in the Pacific; during World War II, American Samoa was the staging point for 30,000 U.S. marines involved in the Pacific theater; the territory was the first land some astronauts came to during the Apollo missions, including the now famous Apollo 13 mission; and American Samoa produces more NFL player per capita than any jurisdiction in the U.S. with approximately 15 Samoans currently playing professional ball.

In the 1990's, stamps were issued in recognition of the Federated States of Micronesia (1990), the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (1993), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (1990), and the Republic of Palau (1995), all of which were territories in recent memory.

Mr. Speaker, with this history of recognizing centennials of statehood, acquisitions of territories and other important events in the political history of every other territory, I ask the U.S. Postal Service why not American Samoa?

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to tell you that there is no balance. There is no logic. There is no equality in treatment. The Postal Service is acting in a manner that is totally inconsistent with its past practices and decisions. How else can you explain the inconsistent actions the Postal Service has taken regarding treatment of U.S. territories.

Perhaps American Samoa stands a better chance of convincing the Postal Service to issue a commemorative stamp if it reframed the current request as one asking for a stamp to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the special relationship between the Samoan Fruit Bat and the United States. The Postal Service has seen fit to issue stamps for a variety of issues and causes, including birds, and perhaps this change in approach will bolster our chances for success.

To achieve balance in representation, Mr. Speaker, is a very difficult task. Reasonable persons with reasonable expectations will disagree about what reasonably balanced means. However, this is not the situation here.